

Things to Know When Studying Shakespeare ...



Some Definitions:

- A Drama:** A story presented through the media of acting, music, dialogue, setting and characterization.
- Comedy:** A drama in which the supreme desire of the hero is realized, and the ending is a happy one for many others in the play.
- Tragedy:** A drama in which the supreme desire of the hero is unrealized and many others in the play also suffer as a result of this.
- History:** A drama in which the plot is based on historical facts chosen by the playwright and adapted to his/her narrative purpose.
- An Act:** A unit of action (sequence of incidents) – Note: Shakespeare's plays consisted of five acts.
- A Scene:** A unit of place and time (exist within each act)

Language of the Drama:

- Pun:** A pun is "a play on words," which intentionally creates ambiguity in meanings of words. A pun is often used for witty or humorous effect.
- Irony:** A device used by the writer/dramatist, creating a contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant (or between expectations and reality).
- Dramatic Irony:** Occurs when the writer/dramatist reveals something important to the reader/audience that a character (speaking or acting in a particular way) is not aware of him/herself.
- NOTE:*** *The difference between Irony and Dramatic Irony is that in the case of Irony, the speaker/character may be aware of the hidden meaning in his/her statements, whereas in Dramatic Irony, the speaker is unaware of any "double meaning."*
- Soliloquy:** A soliloquy is a speech made by a speaker to him/herself, revealing the character's thoughts. It presents information to the audience, revealing a character's true motives. When a soliloquy is delivered, there are *no other actors present on stage!*
- Aside:** An aside is a brief speech spoken (or whispered) by the speaker to himself. It is conventionally only heard by the audience, even though *other characters are present on stage!*

Rhyming Couplet: A pattern in poetry that consists of two rhyming lines (think of "couple" → two) ☺
Example: Her eyes in heaven/ Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.

The above lines are spoken by Romeo about Juliet in Act 2, Scene 2. Often, characters who are in love in Shakespeare's play can be heard speaking in rhyming couplets!!

Blank Verse: A type of poetry that does not have a particular rhyming scheme.
Although a few rhyming couplets may be spoken by characters here and there in some Shakespearean plays, his plays are written in blank verse.

Shakespearean Pronouns

Pronoun	When Used	Example
Thou (you) *When "you" is the <u>subject</u> of the sentence	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	Thou art my friend.
Thee (you) *When "you" is the <u>object</u> of the sentence	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	I love thee. I give thee all my love.
Thy (your)	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer. <u>Thy</u> is not used before words beginning with a vowel or before words beginning with a silent "h" followed by a vowel. Instead, <u>thine</u> is used.	Here is thy sword. I love thy company
Thine (your)	To show possession without a following noun or with a following noun beginning with a vowel or a silent "h" followed by a vowel.	This sword is thine. Where is thine enemy?
Thyself (yourself)	To address a person of inferior status, such as a child or servant; to address a friend; to impart a poetic ring when expressing profound thoughts or reciting a prayer	Prepare thyself. Thou thyself art a fool.